

More medical scheme pain: Bonitas joins Discovery with hefty price hike – Fin24 18 September 2019

Bonitas, the second-biggest medical scheme in the country, joined market leader Discovery in announcing substantial price hikes.

On average, monthly contributions for Bonitas will increase by 9.9% from next year, with increases ranging between 6.2% and 11.9%. **Discovery members will pay an average of 9.5%** more in 2020. Last year, Discovery increased its contributions by 9.2%.

Over the past year, Bonitas reported an income of R15.7bn, but its surplus declined from R730m to R164.8m due to higher-than-expected claims and a weaker performance from its investments.

It said its adjustments were based on a growth in membership, as well as an increased emphasis on managed care. The private medical aid industry normally makes fee adjustments at a rate of CPI + 4%.

The increases for various Bonitas plans are as follows:

- 6.2% for BonFit
- 8.4% for Primary, Primary Select, BonEssential and BonEssential Select
- 9.3% for Standard and Standard Select
- 9.5% for BonSave
- 11.9% for BonComprehensive, BonClassic, BonComplete, Hospital Standard and BonCap

Adjustments have been made to several health benefits, such as radiology, health, wellness products to encourage healthy living and maternity care, with vouchers for baby products and discounts at Baby City for new mothers. From next year the maternity benefit will allow one of the post-natal consultations to be used for a consultation with a lactation specialist.

About 16% of the population is covered by medical aids, and service providers have in recent years come under pressure from low economic growth and high levels of unemployment, which makes private care unaffordable for many people.

In a bid to provide universal health care, government is moving ahead with plans to implement the controversial National Health Insurance (NHI) fund, which is expected to be operational by 2026. The NHI White Paper was tabled in parliament in August.